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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to facilitate the development of relevant and valid modes of economic education for future needs of our society. The Delphi forecasting method operated through the submission and successive iteration of three rounds of questionnaires to a wide range of specialists in economics and education and of community economic leaders. An advisory committee of 32 specialists made suggestions for implementation, and review and refinement of the questionnaires. The questions concerned the goals, cognitive elements, content, instructional materials and procedures, personnel, organization, and financing of economic education during the decades ahead. A few of the implications noted in the conclusion of the study include the following: that preservice and inservice teacher programs should be a goal; that cognitive elements should emphasize interrelationships; that the major areas of content now emphasized should continue in the future; that process rather than content should be emphasized; that personnel with broad based background and ability are needed; that the most effective type of organization would be one of affiliation with higher education institutions; and that there is little agreement on the best method of financing the economic education movement in the future.
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DEVELOPING AN ECONOMIC EDUCATION PROGRAM
FOR THE FUTURE

A Delphi Research Study

by

Dr. Billy M. Morrison

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Developing An Economic Education Program For The Future

Economic education, a significant current in the mainstream of education for the last two decades, must begin to plan ahead if it is to continue as a constructive educational force in a rapidly changing world. In this sense, a dynamic program of economic education should foster understanding of the causes and effects of change, and enable the student to attain the knowledge and skills necessary for him to play a constructive role for his own welfare and the welfare of others in the total environment of future decades.

The purpose of this study was to facilitate the development of modes of economic education that will have relevance and validity for the future educational needs and goals of our rapidly evolving society.

In pursuing this study, the Delphi Forecasting Method was utilized. This operated through the submission and successive iteration of three rounds of questionnaires to a wide range of specialists in economics, education, and leaders from the economic community.

Before employing the Delphi Forecasting Method for this study, however, an advisory committee, consisting of thirty-two specialists in economics, educations, and leaders from the economic community, was formed by invitation to people considered to be specialists in the fields mentioned. This group functioned as a petit jury in making suggestions for implementing the study, and in reviewing and refining the questionnaires prior to their submission to the main body of Delphi respondents.

1. See Appendix A for a list of the "Members of the Advisory Committee."

Early in January, 1972, a questionnaire composed of information about future societal developments, recent trends in economic education, and questions soliciting opinions regarding the future of economic education, was formulated and sent to the advisory committee for their criticism, review, and evaluation. By the latter part of February the questionnaire had been revised in consideration of the various modifications and constructive criticisms that had been offered by the advisory committee, and the first round questionnaire, preceded by introductory information, was mailed to eighty-three participating respondents on February 28, 1972. This questionnaire asked Delphi respondents to express their opinions on seven questions concerning economic education during the decades ahead. These questions dealt with: (1) goals; (2) cognitive elements; (3) content; (4) instructional procedures and materials; (5) personnel and their training; (6) organization; and (7) financing.

The second round questionnaire was constructed solely from the opinions and reasons that the Delphi respondents had expressed on the round one questionnaire. The second round questionnaire, an itemized preference scale of opinions and reasons, was mailed to eighty respondents on April 5, 1972. Three respondents, of the original eighty-three had asked to be relieved from the study, and thirty more had not responded at all to the first round. However, in order to keep a high level of participation, second round questionnaires were sent to both the fifty respondents who had answered round one, and the thirty respondents who had not answered round one.

The third round questionnaire was formulated from second round responses and mailed on May 6, 1972, to the fifty respondents who had answered the round two questionnaire. By June 23, 1972, forty-five Delphi respondents² had returned their third and final round questionnaires and that aspect of the study was terminated.

The Delphi respondents final round opinions were analyzed through the application of the Chi-square technique which sought to establish the validity of their responses at the 5 percent level of confidence. An analysis and synthesis of these responses was developed from the 5 percent level of confidence, in terms of their significance in indicating the nature of economic education programs consistent with the future educational needs and goals of a rapidly evolving society.

CONCLUSIONS

These conclusions, derived from respondents opinions, suggest a number of implications for economic education as it seeks to continue to be a dynamic, constructive force in the education of young people during the decades ahead.

I The Goals of Economic Education for the Next Two Decades

One goal of economic education for the next two decades should be to promote and provide pre-service and in-service programs for teachers. Many such programs, especially in-service, are now available through state council workshops. However, expansion, and continual evaluation of these programs will insure their relevance to the constantly changing

2. See Appendix B for a list of "Delphi Respondents."

needs of the individual and society. Pre-service will be needed to prepare the new teacher, and in-service will be necessary to assist the veteran teacher to prepare for new concepts, programs, and materials as they are developed in the context of a rapidly changing society. In-service is also valuable because it permits feedback and interchange of ideas among teachers, as well as a sounding-board where teachers may share their problems, ideas, needs, and experiences with the professional economic educator.

Expanded involvement of institutions of higher learning should be another goal of economic education. There are approximately fifty-six centers for economic education affiliated with colleges and universities. Expansion of their role, in terms of in-service programs, curriculum development, preparation, experimentation and dissemination of learning materials could greatly enhance the quality of economic education.

Institutions of higher learning, with their expertise and research facilities, could contribute immeasurably to continual evaluation, and development of new ideas that have relevance for an economic education program that seeks to prepare young people for continual change in the decades ahead.

The development, improvement, and expansion of the availability of economic education learning materials for all grade levels should be another goal of economic education. This goal is being met, by varying degrees of success. That is, numerous types of learning materials are available for those who wish to utilize them. However, in terms of our

rapidly changing societal milieu, new pertinent learning materials must be continually developed and evaluated during the years ahead. This, perhaps, is one of the problem areas where the institutions of higher learning may make a meaningful contribution to economic education.

Two problems facing society in the near future are both job obsolescence and more leisure time, though the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. Interpreters of contemporary and future society, however, do suggest that there will be more leisure time and a higher incidence of job obsolescence as automation and cybernation replace the individual operation of machines.

One of the goals of economic education that was suggested by respondents dealt with adult and continuing education. Education of this nature would perhaps be expanded to assist in retraining individuals for new jobs, to assist them in developing creative interests for their leisure time, and from an intellectual standpoint, provide them with the understanding to constructively cope with the changing economic, social, and political forces that influence their daily lives.

The development of decision-making skills, was considered by respondents to be one of the most important goals of economic education. Over a decade ago, in fact, the Task Force on Economic Education recommended that more people "...must learn to think about economic issues objectively and rationally. The alternative is to make decisions on the basis of ignorance and prejudice." Decision-making skills, then, have been promoted by economic education for over a decade.

Now, in terms of both economic education, and other sectors of education, the development of decision-making skills is becoming more and more important. Decision-making skills are necessary for individuals to function fully in an era of change and surprise. The knowledge explosion, for example, is making it increasingly difficult to teach subject matter that will remain relevant throughout an individual's lifetime. Students, rather, should be equipped with the skills to handle new situations that will arise as the tempo of societal change increases, and as some aspects of knowledge become obsolete.

Another goal of economic education for the next two decades should be to develop curricula that enhance a broad, holistic approach to the interrelatedness of economics to both the social sciences and the other disciplines.

Many critics of contemporary education and society point to the dangers of fragmented subject areas, and to the need to develop a holistic approach that shows to learners how interconnected everything in life is. Economics curricula, as well as that of other disciplines, need to be realistically formulated so students will understand the patterns of interrelatedness that actually exist. We must stop emphasizing bits and pieces of knowledge, and begin to develop curriculum that employs the interdisciplinary aspects of knowledge, learning, and skills.

The development of economic concepts and principles appropriate for all age and grade levels should also be a goal of economic education for the next two decades. This is a goal, however, that economic educators

have been working toward for almost a decade, with a reasonable amount of success. It is perhaps more important that the curriculum developers who formulate appropriate concepts and principles continually review the product of their work in relation to its relevancy for the changing needs and goals of the individual and society during the years ahead.

Another goal of economic education should be to enable students to know how various economic systems work in allocating scarce resources among the many needs of individuals in the total society. This, the only knowledge goal suggested by respondents, is a broad, all-inclusive objective that no one could disagree with. Moreover, it is dynamic because knowledge of this nature will always be valuable regardless of what societal milieu it is investigated in.

It is interesting to note here, that processes such as decision-making skills was much more in evidence as a goal of economic education, than was knowledge or subject matter. In effect, respondents were more concerned with the future need for coping with knowledge, than with knowledge itself.

One of economic education's goals, in a broad and long range sense, should also be to participate in solving social problems. Toward that goal, respondents suggested the importance of a research environment that could apply economic analysis to contemporary and future social issues. The economic education movement, to date, has not been involved in this form of activity, except as it relates to economic education, per se. However, it is through pertinent educational programs that assist the

students in developing analytical skills, that economic education can best play its role in helping to cure existing and potential social ills.

The intelligent application of economic analysis to problems, either individual or societal, must begin early in the educational process, must be developed in both a theoretical and practical sense, and should be learned as one of those skills that an individual can apply anytime to any situation.

A research environment, however, or institution dedicated to the expressed purpose of curing social problems, is not within the scope or immediate general purposes of the economic education movement.

A final, but significant goal for economic education in the future is to exhibit more concern for the learner. Until very recently, this has not been the prime focus of the economic education movement.

Yet, new social and economic structures will demand new values and commitments. The accelerating tempo of change will lead to more cultural lag, and perhaps disorientation. As Professor Franklin Patterson has pointed out in, "Human Issues in Post-Industrial Society: The Context of Education Tomorrow," The High School of the Future, ed. William M. Alexander, (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970), the schools of the future must also be able to deal with anxiety, values, and identity, as matter of high priority, "...nothing else that education does will be fully or adequately relevant to human needs."

To date, the economic education movement has primarily concerned itself with curriculum, content, method, and evaluation as they apply to economics on the elementary and secondary levels. Little, if any concern has been exhibited toward what might be considered the affective areas of economic education. Attitudes and values, to some degree, are and always have been one of the foci of economic education. However, this focus has been only from the standpoint of general attitudes that relate to economics, per se.

If economic education is to continue as a significant current in the mainstream of education, it must begin to look more closely at the learner as an individual, not just someone whose head must be crammed with economic facts, concepts, and principles. In-service programs, which generally seek to up-grade and up-date teachers' familiarity with content and methodology, could perhaps devote some of their time in assisting educators to be more aware of the various socio-economic forces that are causing anxiety and identity problems throughout a significant sector of society. Understanding of these forces may then offer clues that will enable educators to develop programs that are both cognitively and affectively oriented toward learners and learning.

II The Cognitive Elements Economic Education Should Emphasize for the Next Two Decades

Respondents were strongly in favor of the cognitive elements that emphasize interrelationships students should learn, regarding economics. Values, for example, and their relationship to socio-economic decisions,

or the ability to understand the relationship between long and short range trends.

This recommendation closely agrees with one of the goals of economic education that stressed a broad, holistic, interdisciplinary curriculum, constructed to foster student's understanding of economics and its interrelatedness with other disciplines.

This cognitive element, usually classified as an aspect of knowledge rather than skill, is considered to be the most abstract of the cognitive elements of knowledge.

The ability to understand interrelationships, though of a high cognitive level, can best be developed through the cognitive skills and abilities that foster analysis. And, one of the other cognitive elements respondents believed economic education should emphasize for the next two decades, was analysis. If then, interrelationships are to be stressed, the development of analytical skills must also be emphasized, as indeed it was by the respondents.

Cognitive elements related to decision-making skills should also be stressed in economic education. This skill was already mentioned as one of the goals that respondents believed should be accentuated. In that sense, a second treatment of the implications for decision-making skills is not necessary here. However, the consensus and consistency of respondent's agreement on this skill should indicate the primacy of its value to economic education.

Decision-making skills cover a wide range of cognitive elements, including comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation,

and their respective component elements. Therefore, economic education should accentuate the development of these abilities and skills as integral aspects of the learning process. Not only are they valuable in terms of understanding economics, but the ability to apply these skills to all aspects of learning will enhance a student's ability to function more constructively in his continually changing societal milieu.

A similar, but more specific cognitive element that economic educators should emphasize is analysis. For over a decade, this aspect of the cognitive skills has been considered to be of prime importance for studying and understanding "...the functioning of the economic system and the relative merits of alternative economic policies..." In fact, as early as 1961, the National Task Force on Economic Education, as quoted above, recommended that economic analysis should be one of the major skills that economic educators should attempt to develop in their students.

Today, as well as the decades ahead, economic educators should continue to assist students in developing analytical skills. These, of course, cannot be learned descriptively, but rather should be taught in context of their application, and learned most properly through their utilization to solve real or simulated issues and problems.

Analytical skills, by the same token, are translatable because they can readily be applied to other disciplines and may be utilized for all types of problems. In terms of student's future needs, the ability to apply analytical skills would appear to be much more important than the memorization of information which may be forgotten or which may become

obsolete. In many respect, the recommendation of the Task Force in 1961, were futuristic!

Respondents also evidenced concern for the cognitive aspect of knowledge in economic education, by recommending that basic terminology, principles, and generalizations should be emphasized during the decades ahead. Knowledge of terminology, though certainly important, may be considered as one of the lower levels of the cognitive domain. Knowledge related to principles and generalizations, however, is more difficult and includes more abstract elements. If, however, economic education is to follow the implications of this study and focus more on interrelationships for example, then knowledge of a body of principle and generalizations must be developed.

Essentially, respondent's recommendations regarding what cognitive elements to emphasize, have struck a fine balance between the cognitive aspects of knowledge and the cognitive aspects of intellectual abilities and skills. Hopefully, economic educators will follow this example.

III The Major Areas of Content That Economic Education Should Emphasize for the Next Two Decades

The major areas of content that economic education should emphasize during the decades ahead, were for the most part, basic content that economic educators emphasize now. Labor economics, income distribution, fiscal policy, comparative advantage, international economics, and choice theory, for example, were some of the aspects of economics content that respondents believed should be taught.

However, three areas of content that received the strongest concurrence, dealt with economic growth, government's role in the economy, and the relation of economics to the individual.

Economic growth should be emphasized in economic education content because we may be reaching a point where that growth has and will have enormous negative consequences such as, air pollution, water pollution, and the disposal of solid wastes. Survival, then, and the social costs of production and economic growth are problems that students should be aware of, and learning how to solve.

Numerous factors, of course, are involved in understanding and dealing with economic growth--"no growth" theories. What are the relationships between economic growth and pollution, racism, underdevelopment, and the quality of life? Can there be ecological stability through economic planning? How does American affluence and economic growth affect the resources of the entire world? Can full employment be maintained without economic growth?

It would appear that many of the goals and the cognitive skills mentioned thus far, can be brought to bear on contemporary and future problems related to economic growth. Students, for example, may tend to be idealistic and offer general solutions by suggesting that we stop growing economically and begin to clean up our environment. Can they then, through the employment of economic analysis, and decision-making skills, arrive at priorities, alternatives, and social costs related to cleaning up the environment vs. economic growth? Can they learn to

see the interrelationships between economic growth and full employment? Can they understand how values, priorities, and commitments become involved in planning or attempting to change the direction of economic growth?

Areas of content that relate to economic growth then, would seem to be an especially fertile ground for emphasis in economic education. Real and critical problems are there for students to learn about. Economic's relationship to, and interrelatedness with the factors of affluence, environmental quality, and exhaustion of resources, for example, will have both current and long range impact. By studying the areas of concern, or other content related to economic growth—"no growth", pupils will have the opportunity to apply analysis and other skills to these issues, and will be preparing to solve problems they most certainly will be confronted with in the decades ahead.

Government's role in the economy is another aspect of content that should be emphasized. Obviously, this factor is closely related to economic growth, just discussed. In terms of the future, however, the citizens of tomorrow should understand what role government does, can, and probably will play in the future. Most interpreters of the future, see government playing a more pervasive role in all aspect of our future socio-economic lives. From this standpoint alone, we perform a gross disservice for our students, if we teach them the standards of 18th century socio-economic philosophy, (that government is best which governs least, for example) when we should be educationally socializing them for the socio-economic milieu of the 21st century.

By the same token, can we as educators, assist our students in developing qualities of creativity, initiative, and social responsibility, so the Orwellian visions of 1984 do not become a reality?

Respondents, in fact, exhibited a strong concern for content areas that emphasized the individual's role in a world that is becoming more complex. The value, worth, and dignity of the individual in mass society is and will become increasingly important. The economic educator must more closely examine the affective areas of education and attempt to effectively merge both the cognitive and affective domains in their educational programs.

From an economic standpoint, people are our greatest resource. And economic education can significantly contribute to the qualitative and humanistic development of this resource by assisting young people to develop positive self-images, to choose wisely among alternative modes of thought and behavior, to gain a realization of their individual relatedness and responsibility to social groups, and to be effective problem solvers in a constantly changing environment.

IV The Instructional Procedures and Materials That Economic Education Should Emphasize for the Next Two Decades

One of the common threads throughout these implications has been the emphasis on process rather than content in education. That is, respondents felt that learning skills should be stressed, as opposed to an emphasis on content or subject matter.

In terms of instructional procedures and materials, then, economic education should develop and promote those that facilitate the inquiry processes. Case studies, for example, as well as games and simulations, were thought to be important in assisting students to learn how to think, analyze, solve problems, and make rational decisions. Content or subject matter is not to be forfeited, but rather learned more thoroughly and realistically through the application of inquiry skills that will not become obsolete as readily as some aspects of subject matter.

Another obvious, but important aspect of instructional procedures is the development and utilization of audio-visual equipment and techniques. Electronic media is a significant and pervasive aspect of young people's everyday lives, in and out of school. In the decades ahead, it will become even more of a factor in our daily living. The intelligent development and employment of audio-visual teaching aids can only enhance economic education in the schools of the next two decades.

Films, records, and tapes have already been developed that add a meaningful dimension to a learner's economic understanding. The utilization of these and other electronic media, perhaps should be reexamined to insure their effective use. By the same token, new techniques and equipment should be continually evaluated for their utility and effectiveness. The teacher that does not utilize audio-visual approaches will find it difficult to motivate the minds and attention of students, who in their extra-curricular lives, are continually bombarded with a dazzling array of electronic media.

Another common thread throughout these implications has been that of integration of the disciplines, and the interrelatedness of economics to other disciplines. Respondents, in this case, urged that instructional materials and procedures be developed that would facilitate integration of other disciplines with economics, or that would at least break down disciplinary lines.

Economic educators must then begin to plan for and develop materials and instructional procedures that lend themselves to promoting economic's interrelatedness with other disciplines. This, perhaps, can only be accomplished through a major effort that brings specialists together to plan and develop programs, materials, and techniques for the expressed purpose of interdisciplinary programs. What is being suggested here is another task force, similar to that of 1961, but dedicated to the promotion and development of interdisciplinary modes of education that focus not just on economics, but on all of the social science disciplines in an orchestrated manner.

V The Type of Personnel That is Needed and How They Can Best Be Prepared for the Field of Economic Education for the Next Two Decades

The type of personnel needed, as expressed by respondents, was essentially someone with a broad based background and ability. For example, the type of personnel needed in economic education for the decades ahead should be well trained in both economics and education. Furthermore, the common thread of a broad, interdisciplinary, social science orientation was apparent, as it was with the other implications

of this study. That is, economic educators of the future should be known, perhaps as social science educators, or at least have the background, ability, and interest to promote economic education within a broader interdisciplinary context.

Along with an emphasis on a broad interdisciplinary background, the economic educator of the future must be a pedagogical expert and exhibit a sincere concern for students and teaching.

This combination of background, ability, and interest is indeed both comprehensive and relevant to the projected directions economic education should be taking for the next two decades. Just how many economic educators will meet these qualifications, is another question. The ranks of economic education are now filled with highly competent, dedicated people. If, however, their present skills, ability, and background are not compatible with future needs, then perhaps as new leadership evolves in the decades ahead, it will be comprised of people who do have the necessary qualities to lead economic education during the next two decades.

VI The Most Effective Type of Economic Education Organization for the Next Two Decades

Consensus among respondents showed that they believed the most effective type of organization for economic education during the next two decades would be one of affiliation with institutions of higher learning.

Universities or colleges would seem to offer the most potential because they have a pool of expertise from economics, education, and

related disciplines. As mentioned in the discussion of goals, these institutions also offer facilities for research and development, as well as the necessary prestige for leadership within their sphere of influence.

In addition, a university or college would probably have programs and resources for pre-service and in-service teacher training. This would be one of the most important reasons for affiliation with an institution of higher learning. Both new and veteran teachers then, could act as multipliers for disseminating new techniques, materials, programs, and generally influencing the quantitative and qualitative development of economic education in the elementary and secondary schools.

For the greatest degree of effectiveness, the economic education movement should begin to build an organization that is more interdisciplinary oriented, and in fact should direct its attention to developing a social science oriented organizational structure to serve the needs of education during the decades ahead.

Once again the theme of a broad interdisciplinary approach, as opposed to economic education per se, was expressed in respondent's recommendations. If taken seriously, this recommendation would suggest to economic educators that perhaps they should begin to reevaluate present organizational structures with the assistance of a national task force composed of various interdisciplinary interests. This task force could then advise and direct the development of a new, flexible, dynamic organization that would best serve the needs of economic or social science education during the decades ahead.

VII. The Best Method of Financing the Economic Education Movement for the Next Two Decades

There was little agreement on this question because many of the respondents were not familiar with the financing procedures and problems of the economic education movement. Another reason for the small degree of consensus or new ideas, was that the feedback provided by this author was perhaps too vague and ambiguous to serve as an effective catalyst in prompting productive opinions on the question concerning finance. From this standpoint, no implications can be offered on what the best method would be for financing the economic education movement for the next two decades.

In the final analysis the future of our society and the future of education is not something that will just evolve. Rather, it will be created through the interaction of a vast constellation of technological, social, economic, and ideological forces. The latter, are, however, subject to human intervention, planning, and action. If we take the necessary action now, we will find ourselves no longer restricted to tardy, ineffectual responses to the forces of change; but, instead will be able to chart the course and direction of an education for the future which we ourselves have helped design.

Economic education's role in designing an education for the future is best expressed within the context of the purpose of this study which was to develop modes of economic education that will have relevance and validity for the future educational needs and goals of our rapidly

evolving society. Kenneth Boulding, perhaps, best summarized the need for this study when he pointed to the urgency of a viable economic education program by stating:

An accurate and workable image of the social system in general, and the economic system in particular, is, however, increasingly essential to human survival. If the prevailing images of the social system are unrealistic and inaccurate, decisions which are based on them are likely to lead to disaster. The more complex society becomes the more important it is to have a widespread realistic and complex image of it. ...Economic education, therefore, along with education in other aspects of the social system may well be one of the most important keys for man's survival in the coming centuries or even decades.

3. Kenneth E. Boulding, "Economic Education: The Stepchild Too is Father of the Man," The Journal of Economic Education, Vol. I, No. 2., (Fall, 1969), 10-11.

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